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DEPARTMENT FOR ECA; ECA/P/C; EUR/PPD; EUR/WE; R

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TAGS: [KPAO](#) [SCUL](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [IT](#)

SUBJECT: COORDINATION OF RESPONSE TO ABRUZZO EARTHQUAKE

REF: A) ROME 402, B) ROME 392, C) STATE 33560

¶1. In the wake of the earthquake which struck Italy on April 6 (Ref B), expressions of American solidarity and sympathy have been widely reported in the media and greatly appreciated. Caustic comments about the size of our initial emergency \$50,000 disaster grant were reported in only one provocative newspaper, and quickly balanced by the President's April 7 telephone call to Prime Minister Berlusconi. The contents of that call, as described by the PM to the media, included the President's offer of assistance. The PM said he told the President that Italy could manage well in the immediate aftermath, but that American (and other) assistance would be needed in reconstruction and rehabilitation of cultural monuments, possibly some churches. According to Berlusconi's reports, the President replied positively, indicating the U.S. would look at Italy's needs and try to help.

¶2. This has morphed, in the public consciousness, into the assumption that the USG will be involved in rehabilitation efforts following immediate remediation. Several other governments have also expressed willingness to consider assistance, with media reporting that the FRG offered to rebuild a church in hard-hit Onna, for example. Today we learned that Prime Minister Berlusconi, as a follow-up to his phone call with the President, has tasked Minister of Culture Sandro Bondi with fundraising in the U.S. for the restoration of cultural heritage sites damaged in the earthquake. Asked about the timing, the Minister's staff told us the plan is that the Minister travel to the U.S. within ten days.

¶3. Charge spoke last week to the President of the National Italian American Foundation (NIAF), Joseph V. Del Raso, about possibly combining efforts toward earthquake assistance. Del Raso reacted very positively to the idea of a public-private partnership for the possible rehabilitation of a cultural site, such as a church or other building of cultural significance. It is our understanding that NIAF, which set up a disaster relief fund immediately after the earthquake, had already raised 100,000 dollars at the time of the Charge's conversation with Del Raso.

¶4. Post appreciates ECA's and EUR's interest and looks forward to working with you to determine the best way forward in this effort. We propose Post be the go-between with the GOI, and Washington be the lead in the establishment of a public-private partnership.

¶5. Point of contact at Embassy Rome for this project will be CAO David Mees: [MeesD@state.gov](mailto:MeesD@state.gov); Tel 011-39-06-4674-2120. Cell: 011-39-335-846-8020; Fax: 011-39-06-4674-2478.

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